The Builder.

No. CCXII.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1847.

A FEW days ago we looked down, through a clear sky, on the mighty world of London from the top of Wren's noblest work, St. Paul's Cathedral. In truth, it is an extraordinary sight, and is felt to be so more and more on each succeeding visit. We counsel those of our readers who have not yet enjoyed it; when they are seeking instructive, mind-developing recreation, to wend their way to the "golden gallery" on the summit of the dome, whence they may note, to use a phrase of Leland, "a whole world of things very memorable. Look which way they will,—

"Ten thousand objects hurtle into view,
Of interest wonderful;"

filling the mind with thought,—almost oppressing it indeed by a multitude of absorbing associations. Provided always, however, that the view be looked upon *with the understanding*. To the barren all things are barren. The mere sight-seer, the gazer with the eye only, will be struck by its immensity, gratified by the novelty and beauty it presents. But those to whom we speak would have in addition a higher enjoyment than this, bounded only by the extent of the knowledge that is within them. No one denies that, "To him who is of a mind rightly framed, the world is a thousand times more populous, than to the man to whom every thing that is not flesh and blood is nothing." A building, which by one visitor may be glanced at and forgotten, inciting no inquiry, inducing no recollections,—will in another, differently instructed, lead to long trains of thought, exercise the mind, strengthen or question previous conclusions, and so carry forward his education.

The extent of modern London is astounding. Towards the east flow out streets, scarcely known to the denizens of the west, seemingly interminable, although the wealth and power of the metropolis are marching westward, as they have always done, and are raising masses of new palatial edifices, far away from the point on which we are now standing. A few centuries ago the Tower of London was a royal residence, and our nobles were clustered about it. Then the river banks,—naturally called the Strand,—became a fashionable site; but these shortly after gave place to localities farther and farther west, and soon, the only lord to be found in the city was the lord mayor.

Contrast the London of to-day with London as it appeared in Queen Elizabeth's time, represented in a well-known old map; and if the difference be not sufficiently striking, endeavour to realize London in the time of the Romans, when (even at the close of their long and prosperous settlement here), it extended only from Blackfriars to the Tower in length, and from the Thames to Moorfields in width. It is curious to trace its progress, still more so to watch the changes in the habits and manners of its occupants which have succeeded one another. Roman London lies below us; in places, many feet; its boundaries defined; the state of the arts therein tolerably well understood; the coins, dresses, and ornaments used by the people, known;—and all owing to the exertions of a once ill-understood and much laughed-at class of men, the "musty" antiquaries. If you know where to look for it, you may still trace the outline of the city as it was when under Roman dominion; you may see some of the walls they raised, the pavements they formed; and people its streets with the men and women of that day. This was long ago; and yet not long enough to destroy the characteristics of a simple tuft of moss, placed in a Roman vase, as a cover probably to bones and ashes, and found in Lothbury only a few years since! The incident seems to us a pretty one, and worth a thought.*

The number of churches clustered together within the limits of the city (seventy-five?), as compared with the parts beyond, is very observable from the position we have taken up. Many of them are full of interest; and well deserve a visit if you have not seen them. Several of them date long before the great fire of 1666, the ravages of which they escaped, and have long stories hanging to them (as have others of more recent date), that throw an additional charm over the time honoured structures. There, for example, in Smithfield (that blot on the modern city shield) close at your feet, is the church of St. Bartholomew the Great, the major part of which belongs to the twelfth century. St. Andrew's Undershaft, in Leadenhall-street, with its tale of evil May-day and the Cornhill shaft, is the resting place of poor John Stow, the chronicler of London; and St. Catherine's Cree-church, where some of the earliest "mysteries," or holy plays, were performed, was rebuilt with a curious mixture of styles, as some writers say, by Inigo Jones.

Allhallows, Barking, in Tower-street, is a very interesting old church; and, going a little farther east, there is the miniature church of St. Peter *ad vincula*, in the Tower, built in the time of Edward I., which furnishes a sad confirmation of many disgraceful chapters in English history.

St. Giles's, Cripplegate, is the burial place of three noted Johns,—John Fox, John Speed, and John Milton. In the church-yard, is a portion of old London wall. Bow church was the scene of most singular events; and indeed there is scarcely one church in the city that is not for some cause noticeable. We must pass them by, only stopping to mention St. Edmund's, Lombard street, because in the church formerly on this site, John Shute, "painter-stainer and architect," who published one of the earliest practical works on the art, called "The First and Chief Groundes of Architecture," was buried. Stow says his epitaph commenced thus:—

"This monument declares, that here the corps doe lye,
Of him that sought in science sight to publish prudently,
(Among the rest of things, the which he put in ure.)
That ancient practice and profound, that light of architecture.
A knowledge meet for those, that buildings doe erect.
As by his workes, at large set forth, is shewne the full effect.

The observer, situated where we have placed him, will find matter, too, for ample reflection in the works of Wren, which there come prominently forward; and if he be himself an architect, may find consolation under many difficulties in the remembrance of the treatment received by that great artist. The steeples of the city attest Wren's powers as a designer in a remarkable manner. Note their extraordinary variety; the difficulty with which a spire can be made a part of the style in which he designed; the elegance of their proportions; the skill displayed in their construction; and an acknowledgment of the power of the master cannot be refused.

The city, as all know, was greatly improved in consequence of the Great Fire, but would have been much more so if its re-arrangement had been confided to Wren. Look, now, upon its tangled streets, and the pile of ill-constructed and decaying buildings. One might be excused for wishing for a second fire to clear away the seats of ill-health, moral degradation, and consequent crime and misery, which are seen on every side. Ignorance is the fruitful parent of all evil. Let us all steadily aid in the endeavour to dispel it.

We have but touched our subject, not exhausted it. If our readers rebel not against such gossip,—gossip, nevertheless, which has a good intention, we may return on another bright day to the top of St. Paul's.

* Those who would know more of Roman London should read some interesting papers on the subject by Mr. Roach Smith, published in "The Archæologia."

THE ROYAL MEDAL FOR ARCHITECTURE.

Report of the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects to the General Meeting of the Members, on the designs offered in Competition for the Royal Medal of the Institute, for the Soane Medallion, and on the Essays submitted for the Medals of the Institute for the year 1846.

The Council have to report that, for the royal medal, the subject being a building suitable for the purposes of the Royal Institute of British Architects, eleven designs have been received.

The council deem it proper, in the first instance, to advert to the printed conditions prepared for the guidance of the competitors, and which were issued in May last, as follows:—

"Royal Institute of British Architects,
16, Grosvenor-street, London, 26th May, 1846.

Her Majesty the Queen having been graciously pleased to grant to the Institute an annual medal for the promotion of Architecture, it has been resolved, that it shall be applied to the encouragement of the junior members of the profession by a competition in designs, composed in a style calculated to promote the study of Grecian, Roman, and Italian architecture, and further, that the designs shall be judged of, not only with reference to their merits as works of art, but likewise as to the knowledge of construction they may exhibit.

In order to secure, as far as possible, uniformity in the conditions under which the designs are submitted in competition for the royal medal, it has been determined that the age of the competitor shall be limited to twenty-five years, and that with this limitation the competition shall be open to the profession in general.

The successful competitor will be further entitled to draw upon the treasurer of the Institute for the sum of 50*l.* after his arrival in Rome in the pursuit of his professional studies, at any period within five years from the time of the medal having been awarded to him, upon sending to the Institute a satisfactory study of some existing building, either ancient or modern.

The royal gold medal for the year 1846 will be awarded to the best design for a building suitable to the purposes of the Royal Institute of British Architects; comprising a room for general meetings and lectures, with seats for 350 persons, arranged with a view to the reading of papers, the exhibition of drawings and diagrams explanatory thereof, and for facility of discussion; a council-room for twenty-five members; a library for 10,000 volumes, with suitable depositories for drawings, prints, medals, &c.; a gallery for models, casts, fragments, &c.; an exhibition-room for architectural subjects, and suitable residences for a secretary and a curator.

The cost of the building not to exceed 20,000*l.*

The design to comprise not less than one plan of each story,—two elevations, two sections, and a perspective view.

The scale of the drawings to be one-eighth of an inch to the foot, and to be tinted with Indian ink or sepia only.

DIRECTIONS FOR CANDIDATES.

Each set of drawings is to be accompanied by a sealed letter, containing the name of the competitor

For a comprehensive guide on OCR and PDF Compression go to our website